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ENG 4764-001: Advanced Playwriting

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English 4764: Advanced Playwriting

Instructor: Dr. David Radavich
 Office: 3785 Coleman Hall
 Telephone: 581-6971 (Office) or 345-9280 (Home)

Required Texts:

Cole, ed., *Playwrights on Playwriting*
 Goldstone & Lass, eds., *The Mentor Book of Short Plays*
 Smiley, *Playwriting: The Structure of Action*
 Thomas, *Best American Screenplays*

PURPOSE. This course is a continuation of English 2005 (or equivalent), and it is therefore assumed that you already have a basic command of the major building blocks of drama (e.g., plot, character, setting, climax). We will attempt to develop a sense of performance and audience awareness, increasing your understanding of the relationship between the written word and the demands of audience. To this end, you will be expected to complete one performance-worthy script of one act or longer during the semester.

Along the way, we will examine various genres and major playwriting philosophies, to aid you in developing your own individual approach. You may focus on writing for the stage, TV, screen, or radio. The class will adapt somewhat to the concerns of the majority; however, chief emphasis will fall on live performance, the "granddaddy" of more recent media.

COURSE ORGANIZATION. The course will be divided roughly in half. During the first half, we will be reading and analyzing plays and writing scenes to help you develop your skills before launching into the main script. The second half will focus on revising and perfecting your script through class readings, improvisations, and, possibly, public performance at end of term.

ASSIGNMENTS. The major assignments in this class will require writing scenes to develop your skills in constructing plot, action, and dialogue within a convincing and engaging dramatic setting. In stages, you will work toward a performance-quality script as the culmination of your learning experience. A midterm exam will cover readings and discussion. During the second half of the course, you will be expected to assume performance roles in scripts by others in the class. There will be no final exam; instead, you will turn in your revised script for final evaluation. Two short reviews of live (non-musical) dramatic performances (ca. 2-3 pages double-spaced) will be required and may be turned in at any time during the semester.

GRADING. The grading for this course will be divided into thirds. ONE THIRD of your grade will be determined by your participation in class discussion and performance, as well as by your progress and improvement. Theatre reviews will also be counted in this portion. The SECOND THIRD of your grade will be made up of your writing assignments during term. The midterm exam will be worth **two** playwriting assignments, and the rough draft of your script will be worth **three**.

The FINAL THIRD of your grade will consist of the revised version of your script at semester's end.

LATE WORK. Assignments turned in late will be penalized one-third grade PER CALENDAR DAY late. If you know in advance that you will encounter difficulties in meeting a particular deadline, talk to me beforehand. Missed in-class assignments cannot be made up; that is the reward for coming to class regularly.

PLAGIARISM. According to University policy,

Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism - "The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author, and representation of them as one's original work" (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*) - has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of **F** for the course.

DISABILITY SERVICES. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services (581-6583) as soon as possible.

PARTICIPATION. Drama and the related media arts require group participation and cooperation to be successful. In this course, everyone must read and discuss both the assignments in the texts and the writings of fellow students. Everyone will also be required to perform scripts by other members of the class (acting ability, however, will not be evaluated; only willingness to participate). One third of your grade will be determined by your attendance, active discussion, and participation in script readings.

CONFERENCES. Please feel free to consult me regarding ideas, planning, problems, revision, etc. I would be happy to meet with you at any mutually convenient time.

GRADUATE WORK. In addition to the above-mentioned assignments, graduate students will be required to read three additional full-length works related to their project and to submit a paper of graduate quality synthesizing these readings and employing critical sources.

English 4764 Assignments

- Aug. 23 - Introduction
25 - Smiley, 52-61 (Plot)
- Aug. 30 - Smiley, 42-51 (Form); Gregory, *The Rising of the Moon*
Sept. 1 - **Scene #1 due**
- Sept. 6 - No class; Labor Day
8 - Rattigan, *The Browning Version*
- Sept. 13 - Smiley, Chapter 4 (Character); Acting Exercise I
15 - **Scene #2 due**
- Sept. 20 - Vidal, *Visit to a Small Planet*
22 - Media Discussion
- Sept. 27 - Screenplay (To be selected, in Thomas)
29 - More screenplay; Smiley, 20-28 (Scenario)
- Oct. 4 - **Scenario due**
6 - Acting Exercise II
- Oct. 11 - Wilder, *The Happy Journey*
13 - MIDTERM EXAM
- Oct. 18 - Smiley, 104-121 (Thought)
20 - **Excerpt #1 due**
- Oct. 25 - Smiley, 152-161 (Beats)
27 - **Excerpt #2 due**
- Nov. 1 - *Playwrights on Playwriting*
3 - Smiley, 190-198 (Atmosphere)
- Nov. 8 - Trouble-shooting
10 - **PRELIMINARY SCRIPT DUE**

Nov. 15 - Smiley, 212-221 (Styles of production)
17 - Performance

Nov. 22 & 24 - No class; Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 29 - Performance

Dec. 1 - "

Dec. 6 - "

8 - **FINAL SCRIPT DUE**

No Final Exam